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ABSTRACT

A study of 258 news personnel from 17 newspapers indicated that professional attitudes toward contemporary newspaper journalism fell into three distinct clusters: traditional, interpretative, and activist. Traditional journalists focused on local and spot news, downgraded interpretative and national/international material, and shared their audience's news preferences. Less concerned with local interests, interpreters stressed national news and human interest stories, while activists emphasized international news. Both interpreters and activists stressed investigative reporting. According to multiple-regression analyses, traditionalism indicated both local orientation and pragmatic efficiency--spot news can be processed quickly using newswriting conventions. Results were supported by L. Kohlberg's six-stage model of moral/ethical development. Stage 1, emphasizing arbitrary, fixed rules, reflected the traditionalist stance. Stage 4--basing beliefs on logical reasoning rather then on majority opinion--suggested the interpretative attitude, while stage 6--positing a concern for universal ethical principles--described the approach of many activists. Further research is needed on the possible associations between belief clusters and professionals in journalism. (MM)

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HUGH M. CULBERTSON

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HUGH M. CULBERTSON

Three Perspectives On American Journalism

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HUGH M. CULBERTSON is Professor of Journalism at Ohio University. He thanks Professor William Garber for his helpful comments on the research, graduate students Paul Many and Thomas Hall for their help in conceptualization and data collection, and colleagues Donald Gregg, Virginia Fielder, Byron Scott and Patricia Jones for their contacts and assistance in lining up respondents. Financial support came from the privately endowed Baker Fund at Ohio University. Publication of this manuscript was supported in part by the Ohio University Research Incentive Fund.

AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS have experienced much turmoil in the past generation. Developments have included a "reporter power" movement, chains buying up chains, and supposedly innovative approaches such as precision,[1] new,[2] underground,[3] advocacy, saturation[4] and interpretative[5] journalism. In addition to societal unrest, unionization, journalism reviews and electronic technology, forces for change have included competition from television and an alleged increase in muckraking in the wake of Watergate and other scandals.[6] The specter of TV — along with declining newspaper readership[7] — have intensified emphasis on packaging and editorial strategies[8] to increase audience size and loyalty.

In the wake of such change, journalists, some contend, have begun forming new beliefs about how and why the press functions. Research, however, is sparse on what these beliefs are, how they cluster and what factors may relate to them. Also unresearched is the extent to which these new beliefs have altered or replaced traditional ideas. This study of 258 editors and writers on 17 newspapers looks into these matters.

Specifically, the research proceeded in three steps in an attempt to define three belief clusters mentioned recently in the literature. These clusters are labeled *interpretative, traditional* and *activist.* First, factor analysis was done to identify specific beliefs that might help define each viewpoint or cluster. Some items used were from previous work by Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman[9] and by McLeod and Hawley.[10] Most were developed by the researcher, based on a conviction that concepts

from Grunig's information-systems theory[11] could help define the perspectives. Specifically, it was hypothesized that:

1. Belief in *interpretation* entails an assumption that problem recognition (i.e., uncertainty and a perceived need to process a good deal of information actively before making decisions) in news judgment is high. Interpretation involves defining implications and causes, not simply reporting facts.

2. *Traditional* views focus on and, to a degree, endorse conventional, long-accepted (though now often challenged) decision rules related to news elements or traits such as timeliness, consequence and human interest; formal layout; the inverted pyramid and the summary lead.

3. *Activism* involves a concern with space/time and front-office constraints that can limit treatment of controversy.

In the second step, associations between the belief clusters as defined above and leanings regarding two oft-noted aspects of news judgment — local vs. distant news and interpretative vs. human-interest vs. spot news — were studied. It was expected that traditionalists would emphasize local news and interpreters would focus fairly heavily on national copy (Washington, D.C. being the scene of much so-called interpretation). Activists would tend to emphasize international news, since the causes in which they show interest often appear to have world-wide (or, at least, very broad) implications.

With respect to news type, it was anticipated that traditionalists would stress spot but de-emphasize interpretative content, in line with the stereotype of the hard-bitten city editor. Activists and interpreters were expected to upgrade interpretative or analytic material, but within somewhat different mixes. Interpreters should do so at the expense of human-interest news (after all, interpretation involves explaining, not downgrading, events and spot news). Activists, however, might be expected to place reasonable emphasis on human-interest copy (advocacy of a cause involves some concern with dramatizing and with appealing to readers' feelings and personal interests), while downgrading spot news as a fraction of the total news hole.

In the third phase, a "news-orientation" model was developed based on an assumption that journalists often realize stories of interest to them may not appeal to readers, and vice versa. It was hypothesized that traditionalists would tend to use perceived audience interest as a salient guide when judging news in such a case. (The journalist's need to appeal to a large audience is built into commercial media systems that provided the context for growth of American news traditions.) Activists and interpreters, on the other hand, tend to develop personal perspectives based on their beliefs, research or both. These perspectives were expected to

provide an alternative to audience preferences and reduce emphasis on the latter when judging news.

It is important to note here that the purpose was to define beliefs, not to predict or explain behavior with a single theory. This squares with the recent emphasis on identifying rules and meanings, as well as scientific laws, as key elements in communication scholarship.[12] Thus, it seems appropriate to use varied theories and some tentative speculation in this effort.

Review of Literature and Hypotheses

In a nation-wide survey of over 1,300 working journalists, Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman found two viewpoints — the neutral and the participant. Holding one set of beliefs correlated mildly and negatively with holding of the other. However, most respondents subscribed somewhat to both perspectives.[13] Proponents of the *neutral* school see news as emerging naturally from events. Responsible journalism is said to require objectivity and factual accuracy. Neutral journalists object strongly to biased, sensational or excessive coverage — to sins of commission that may get in the way of telling nothing but the truth.

Argyris applied the term "traditional" to the same basic set of beliefs.[14] The traditionalists he encountered at a prestigious U.S. newspaper placed great emphasis on common sense, speed, accuracy and persistence in fact collection and verification — and on clear, interesting writing, adhering to such conventions as the inverted pyramid and summary lead. In a related vein, Weaver refers to traditional government reporters as liberal.[15] He says they depend heavily on news sources within government and other institutions. Such dependence undoubtedly hampers the reporter's oft-noted role as an independent watchdog. However, the liberal journalists described by Weaver have many chips on their side in a perpetual poker game with officials. Availability of many sources reduces a reporter's dependence on any one. Also, diverse sources act as checks and balances for each other. Merrill and Lowenstein have used the phrase "neutral or reflective" in reference to traditionalists.[16] Sigal also has spoken of neutral observers.[17]

The *participant* school presumably shares with the neutralist a concept of fairness. However, participants see the reporter as actively involved in defining truth. Reporters must report news in context, sifting through available information to find implications, causes and meaning.[18] Primary journalistic sins include news suppression, irrelevance and superficiality — sins of omission whereby one fails to reveal the whole truth.[19] Other authors stress two facets of active reporter involvement. Argyris's *reporter-activist*[20] and Merrill and Lowenstein's directive or leadership journalist[21] feel comfortable using news columns to persuade.

Weaver[22] and Sigal[23] note the growth of adversary relationships with officials — perhaps sometimes to the detriment of gaining information.

Johnstone and his colleagues imply that, while shades of meaning exist, a journalist's professional beliefs can be described on a single neutral-participant continuum.[24] Similarly, Merrill and Lowenstein write of "ambiguous" journalists who act both as advocates and objective reporters at different times.[25] Argyris, however, finds a distinct third type — the *reporter-researcher*. Like the activist, this type emphasizes drawing conclusions about causes and implications. Reporter-researchers, however, model themselves after scholars rather than reformers.[26] Social, political and other change or stability is not viewed as a primary concern. Meyer's precision journalist[27] and Downie's new muckraker[28] both use social-scientific and other scholarly methods and concepts to better understand what lies beneath a complex story. Both also spend a great deal of time on a given project. Clearly the researcher-reporter shares with the activist a desire to define issues and draw conclusions actively and somewhat subjectively. However, at least one recent study suggests that journalists see a distinction between supporting or opposing a cause or person and seeking truth.[29]

Of the authors cited here, only Johnstone, et al., developed measuring instruments to gauge acceptance, rejection and clustering of beliefs. Their measures, however, do not stem from a very thorough analysis of specific journalistic beliefs and practices. The present study seeks to build on their work and examine the possibility that beliefs form three independent clusters not falling neatly on a single continuum. The clusters will be labeled *traditional* (akin to the neutral perspective of Johnstone, et al.), *idealistic interpretative* (analogous to Argyris's reporter-researcher) and *activist* (following Argyris). Each belief cluster is defined first in light of Grunig's information-systems concepts and research on journalistic professionalism.

The sources cited above suggest that journalistic beliefs often have to do with the constraints and routinization in the newsroom.[30] Such beliefs acquire new and theoretically significant meaning in light of Grunig's theory,[31] which says in part that openness and intensity of information-seeking are greatest where one finds:

1. *Recognition of a problem* — indeterminacy that needs to be resolved. Given this, one is led to define new alternatives rather than repeat behaviors or continue to hold existing assumptions. Problem recognition, then, relates to perceived complexity of decisions and the attendant need for analysis and active information-seeking before one makes them.

2. Perception of *few constraints* to communication and the use of information gained through it. Where such constraints are recognized, communication may be minimal (or in some cases, limited to identifying and surmounting constraints).[32] Under some conditions, high constraint

is thought to lead to passive message consumption — attending to but not seeking information. Previous research suggests two major types of newsroom constraint of concern to journalists. These are space/time pressure and influence on news decisions by top newspaper executives.[33]

3. Lack of domination by simple *referent criteria* or decision rules. Such a rule (for example, a mandate to balance informative with entertaining news in a certain ratio each day) can act as a kind of short-cut formula, reducing the range and amount of information seen as needed to define situations and make decisions.

Earlier work suggests at least three types of decision rules in news-editorial work. The first focuses on newswriting conventions such as the summary lead and the inverted pyramid. The second focuses on acceptance of balance and formality in page layout. Third is the use of news elements or pegs such as consequence, human interest and timeliness in judging news.[34] The first three hypotheses studied relate information-systems concepts to the three schools of thought in an effort to help define the latter.

Hypothesis 1. Traditionalists tend more than nontraditionalists to accept the utility of certain decision rules noted earlier. They see formal layout as both desirable and widely used. They approve of newswriting conventions. Traditionalists view news elements as useful devices. Clearly respect for a field's traditions suggests that one accepts decision rules that textbooks consider "conventional wisdom." The inverted pyramid,[35] summary lead[36] and news elements[37] appear to have such status. Also, gray, rather formal makeup still characterizes such prestigious, tradition-oriented papers as the New York *Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Christian Science Monitor*.

Hypothesis 2. Journalists placing strong emphasis on interpretation show higher problem recognition in looking at news than do those with less emphasis. As noted earlier, participant or nontraditional journalists allegedly see information collection and checking as complex and subjective. According to Johnstone, et al., they see reporters as actively involved in providing context and sifting through information to find implications, causes and meaning.[38] Clearly this requires active information-seeking and careful analysis. Downie and Meyer,[39] among others, have defined related approaches in today's newsrooms.

Hypothesis 3. Activist journalists tend more than people not holding activist beliefs to express high concern about space/time constraints and about the impact of front-office pressure on news judgment. Since they must explain implications related to a position or cause, activists presumably feel a need to write longer pieces, with more background and inferences, than would a non-activist. Thus constraints should seem especially onerous to the activist. Also, executive pressure might seem especially bothersome and noticeable to anti-establishment people. In

Argyris's study, activists tended to seek change and debunk those in positions of power.[40] Anecdotal literature on the "new" and "underground" presses reveals the same notion.[41]

A second set of hypotheses deals with the emphasis one might give to three types of stories — timely spot news, soft or human interest news, and analytic or interpretative reporting. While the literature gave few clear guidelines here, the three schools of thought seemed likely to yield different inclinations as to story type.

Hypothesis 4. Traditionalists emphasize spot news while de-emphasizing interpretation more than do those not holding traditional beliefs. This proposition stems from the traditional view that "objective reporting of facts which "reveal themselves naturally" is the key to good newspaper journalism. Facts are thought to be the stuff of spot news. At the same time, traditionalists are expected to be suspicious of the subjectivity needed in interpretation.

Hypothesis 5. Those believing in investigative journalism tend more than non-believers to emphasize interpretative journalism, doing so at the expense of human interest rather than spot news. The research-oriented interpreter, with roots in the social responsibility theory of the press, should feel that interpretation must build on and not replace spot news. Social responsibility theory is said to call for "reporting facts in a context which gives them meaning," not downgrading them.[42]

Hypothesis 6. Believers in activism also tend more than non-believers to emphasize interpretation. However, in this case, emphasis comes at the expense of spot rather than human interest news. The idea here is that activists, as noted by Argyris,[43] Merrill and Lowenstein,[44] and others, seem compelled to emphasize conflicting points of view in dramatic, persuasive, perhaps personal ways. Human interest seems very likely to command reasonable emphasis in such thinking. At the same time, activists seemingly must interpret to make the implications of and bases for their positions clear.

In a third part of the study, respondents indicated how much emphasis they might place on international, national, state and local news. It seems likely that the three belief clusters imply differing views as to news location. Related hypotheses follow.

Hypothesis 7. High traditionals tend more than lows to emphasize local news while downplaying national and international news. Readers[45] and scholars[46] have recognized local coverage as the American newspaper's traditional long suit, though Bagdikian sees a recent trend toward national and regional emphasis.[47] Localization squares, of course, with the traditional libertarian view that a newspaper is primarily a business.[48] It's much less expensive to cover one's hometown than to train and deploy people abroad or to Washington.

Hypothesis 8. Those believing in interpretative journalism downgrade

local news while emphasizing national coverage more than do non-believers. National-news emphasis seems likely in view of the fact that, in the United States today, highly publicized interpretative work tends to focus on national institutions. In a recent survey, senior editors often commented that many investigative techniques such as unnamed attribution hold sway primarily in Washington.[49] Also, prestige papers best known for investigative work (for example, the New York *Times, Wall Street Journal* and *Christian Science Monitor*) have national audiences.

Local news may be downgraded somewhat by interpreters primarily because, in investigating a local problem, it's often helpful to seek parallels and principles which apply elsewhere. Epstein notes that network television often "nationalizes" a local story, making sense of an occurrence by relating it to other riots or events around the country.[50] Furthermore, science involves a search for general laws which apply beyond the local or specific instance.[51] This approach should affect journalists inclined toward interpretation if they view social scientists as models.

Hypothesis 9. Activists tend to place high emphasis on international news, primarily at the expense of local coverage. The rationale here is that believers in a cause tend to see it as being of world-wide relevance and perhaps cosmic importance a la Eric Hoffer's "true believer."[52] This appears to stem from needs to justify one's commitment and to seek social support. For example, Wold reported deep commitment to the women's movement after coming to feel at one with women in other times and places.[53] Also, the "authoritarian personality" tradition in social psychology suggests that commitment to a cause is often all-consuming and seemingly of cosmic relevance because of basic personality factors.[54]

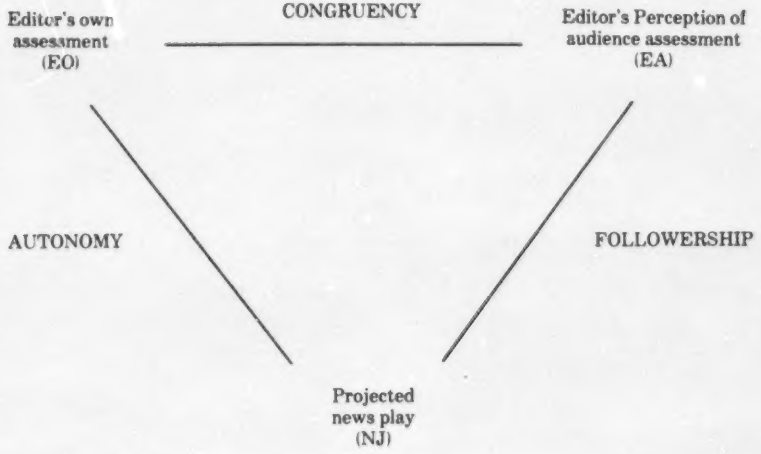
A fourth theoretic perspective, the news-orientational model, derives from coorientation theory[55] and focuses on two questions which a thoughtful journalist might ask. First, the journalist might ask, how much do my audience and I differ in news interests and tastes? Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman found that journalists are far from a representative sample of the public at large.[56] Yet Gans discovered that many editors and writers assumed audience tastes resemble their own. Skepticism about audience research and a feeling that audiences are too diverse and big to analyze apparently contributed to this tendency.[57] The journalist then might ask, if my own and the audience's perspectives differ somewhat, which affects my news decisions more?

News-orientation stems from links among three components. First is the *editor's own* (EO) rating of articles or article types as to personal level of interest. Second is the *editor's perception of audience* (EA) rating.[58] *Congruency* denotes the level of similarity between the EO and EA profiles. Stamm and Pearce[59] and Brown et al.[60] have emphasized congruency because it is a "link to reality" useful in assessing one's relations to others so as to structure communication behavior. In the present model,

the journalist rates or ranks stories or story types as to actual news play which might be given in an ideal version of his or her paper. Adding this third component; projected news judgment (NJ), permits computation of two additional indices: *autonomy*, the extent to which a journalist's news-judgment decisions correspond with his or her own interest or preferences; and *followership*, the degree to which news-judgment and perceived-audience profiles resemble each other.

A good deal of social-science literature points to the importance of autonomy and followership. Miller and Stokes note that legislators can operate in at least two ways.[61] First, they can act according to personal convictions (i.e., autonomously). Second, they can follow constituent leanings, even when opposed to their own. Evidence suggests that legislator autonomy runs high on some issues but not others. Miller and Stokes comment that the autonomy vs. followership issue, applied to elected officials, relates closely to a great deal of theorizing about democratic government.

FIGURE 1
The News-orientation Model



Each line indicates a measure of similarity between two assessments of news stories or types. For example, autonomy is the degree of similarity between EO and NJ.

Merrill has placed particular emphasis on autonomy of news personnel. His "existential journalist" applies personal conscience, skills and ideals without slavish obedience to audience, colleagues or news sources.[62] Carey has questioned the practicality of complete adherence to Merrill's position.[63] Flegel and Chaffee found evidence of high autonomy among reporters in Madison, Wisconsin.[64] On the other hand, Martin, O'Keefe and Nayman discovered rather high followership (vis-a-vis the audience) but low autonomy among editors.[65] These results seem consistent with Tunstall's assertion that editors tend to take audiences into account more than do reporters. The latter, Tunstall believes, interact (and presumably coorient a great deal) with news sources.[66]

Hypothesis 10. High traditionalists score higher than low traditionalists on congruency and followership and lower on autonomy. This hypothesis derives from the oft-noted claim that traditional journalists have learned to set aside or ignore their own perspectives.[67] Furthermore, because of the nature of their work, newspaper people are said to have few bases for drawing conclusions on their own.[68] Given the lack of a real and useable personal perspective, high congruency (taking the audience into account in arriving at one's own opinion) and followership (editing and reporting to suit audience tastes), as well as low autonomy, seem likely with traditionalists.

Hypothesis 11. Those believing strongly in interpretation have lower congruency and followership, but higher autonomy, than do those not holding such beliefs.

Hypothesis 12. Those believing strongly in activist journalism have lower congruency and followership, but higher autonomy, than do those who do not hold such beliefs strongly.

Hypotheses 11 and 12 stem from the assumption that the interpreter's research and the activist's cause-related beliefs provide distinct personal frames of reference for assessing news. These perspectives should serve as alternatives to perceived audience tastes in defining a journalist's own opinion (lowering congruency) and in deciding on news play (lowering followership). At the same time, such personal viewpoints, if deeply believed in, should tend to provide guidance in looking at news. High autonomy of news assessment might be expected as a result.

Methodology

Sampling. Two hundred and fifty-eight reporters and editors on 17 U.S. newspapers participated in the study between July 1, 1979, and Jan. 30, 1980. The study covered full-time, main-office reporters and editors. Personnel from family-living, Action Line and Sunday-edition staffs were included along with those on city desks, copydesks and on editorial-page staffs and in other editorial departments. Photographers, sports staffers, stringers and bureau personnel were excluded.

Newspapers sampled were of two types. First, 10 small dailies within a 70-mile radius of Athens, Ohio, were chosen.[69] Only two papers within this area were missed. Next, seven larger papers in the east and midwest were chosen purposively so as to insure that the sample resembled the nation's 1,744 dailies as to size, ownership pattern and time of publication (morning or afternoon).[70] The final 17 papers ranged in weekday circulation from 6,000 to 684,000, and mean weekday circulation was 83,848, about twice the national average of 34,820 reported in 1980.[71] Morning papers accounted for 35% (6 of 17) in the sample compared with 21% nationally. At least six morning publications were needed to reflect any tendencies they might show. Nationally, about 73% of all dailies were reportedly chain-owned in late 1979.[72] In the sample, 71% (12 of 17) belonged to large regional and national organizations. Five papers were affiliated with Gannett, three with the Thomson organization, and one each with Scripps-Howard, Field Enterprises, and Cox. In addition, two small southern-Ohio papers in the study belonged to a small chain, the Wayne Newspaper Co.

On the smaller papers, all available staff were interviewed by the author or a graduate assistant. On the larger papers, a random sample of 35 staffers, stratified by department, was drawn from each paper's list of current editorial personnel. Seventy percent of all sampled journalists responded. Questionnaires were self-administered where the researcher could not complete personal interviews. In such cases, research-oriented colleagues contacted management to arrange for questionnaire distribution and collection. All respondents were told they would not be identified by name.

A total of 136 respondents worked on papers with less than 100,000 circulation, 122 on larger dailies. The sample included 78 general-assignment reporters, 36 wire and copy editors, 36 staffers from entertainment-oriented sections (Sunday magazines as well as fashion, theater, television and Action Line), 51 reporters assigned to specific hard-news beats and sections, and 54 city, news, executive, managing and assistant city editors.

Measurement of belief variables. Twenty-eight Likert-type items, each with a five-point agree-disagree scale, dealt with beliefs about newspaper journalism. Roughly one-half of all items had positive wording and one-half negative. Item analysis proceeded in two stages. First, factor analyses used in prior research were replicated. Second, concept scores were factor analyzed to identify those which related to the three hypothesized belief clusters: traditionality, activism and interpretation.

Six information-systems indices were used. These stemmed from a previous study of 123 upper-class journalism students.[73] Factor analysis

replicated results published elsewhere. Item scores were summed to form the indices. The first index consisted of three items on *problem recognition* dealing with whether news judgment is a fairly simple process, whether an editor must read widely to judge spot news well, and whether effective judgment of spot news requires much thought and analysis. The second index included two statements on *decision rules related to layout style*, one dealing with acceptability and one with extent of current use of formal layout in newspapers. Three statements on *utility of news elements* as decision rules were used for an index. One item dealt with the importance of timeliness, one with human interest, and one with the overall significance of news elements such as timeliness, human interest and consequence. Two items on the importance of *sensationalism* and of conflict and bad news as factors in news judgment made up the fourth index. Two items on newsroom *space/time constraints* were used for a fifth index. One specified that newspaper personnel often desire to write books and work in other media as a result of newspaper constraints. The second statement said most newspaper articles are shorter than needed for readers to understand them. Two statements dealing with constraint by *front-office pressure* made up the sixth index. One item concerned influence on news judgment in general by publishers and other top news executives. A second item dealt with executive influence on the play given specific stories.

Four additional items were borrowed from the Johnstone, et al., measure of neutral and participant perspectives.[74] These were combined with items identified in a previous study of 209 high-level newspaper editors,[75] and other statements developed for this study to form six additional indices. Three items covering *general interpretation* dealt with the importance of investigating government claims and statements, the need for analyzing and interpreting complex problems, and the significance of discussing national policy while it is still evolving. All three items fell on the participant factor of Johnstone, et al.,[76] and on a single factor in the present research. Surprisingly, discussion of evolving policy loaded most highly on a separate timeliness factor in the above-mentioned study of senior editors.[77]

Two statements on *reformism* formed a second index. One, from Johnstone, et al., asked whether the news media now have too many rather than too few social reformers. The second dealt with whether a journalist should be actively involved as a participant (for example, campaigning or marching) in an event or controversy which he or she is covering. Two items reflecting *general acceptance of journalistic tradition* formed an index. One zeroed in on the desirability of traditional newswriting style, another on the general acceptibility of journalistic traditions. These items were developed for the current study.

Two statements, both new in this research, covered the need to write *objectively* and to keep a journalist's own opinions from appearing in news columns. Two items considered *idealistic job performance.* One asked whether a journalist should be willing to go to jail, if necessary, to protect a news source. The other gauged acceptability of informational junkets sponsored by business organizations or government agencies with no strings attached. Both statements came from the job-performance index of McLeod and Hawley.[78] Three items from the aforementioned study of advanced journalism students dealt with *audience orientation* — specifically the importance of editors and

TABLE 1

Factor Analysis of Items Related to General Beliefs About Journalism

	Factor I Traditionality	Factor II Idealistic Interpretation	Factor III Problem Recognition	Factor IV Activism
Belief in utility of news elements	.51	.14	−.22	−.10
Belief in journalistic traditions in general	.47	.08	.01	−.06
Belief in importance of objectivity; keeping reporter opinions out of straight news	.42	.12	.04	−.12
Audience orientation (belief in importance of careful audience study and research)	.36	−.12	.08	−.07
Belief in idealistic job performance (going to jail if needed to protect sources, avoiding junkets)	.10	.40	.21	−.04
Belief in need for general interpretation	.03	.67	.08	.05
Problem recognition (belief in need for careful study even in evaluating spot news)	.07	.21	.70	.05
Concern with newsroom time/space constraints	−.31	.09	.01	.50
Belief in reformism (covering events in which one is actively involved as participant, and need for crusaders and social reformers on newspaper staffs)	−.25	.13	−.07	.47
Percentage of common-factor variance accounted for by each factor	44%	30%	16%	11%

Only subscales used to describe a given factor are included here.

reporters staying in touch with their audiences, worrying about their audiences, and studying readers carefully.[79]

In a second phase of item analysis, summed scores from the 12 indices listed above were factor analyzed. Principal-axis solutions with two, three and four factors were followed by varimax rotation. Indices which loaded most highly on a given factor in more than one solution figured in defining belief clusters. Table 1 reports on the four-factor solution. As expected, the analyses generated factors reflecting three perspectives discussed earlier. Problem recognition defined a fourth factor.

Traditionality hinged on perceived utility of news elements, the importance of objectivity, audience orientation and general respect for journalistic tradition. A total of 10 individual items formed this overall index. *Idealistic interpretation* encompassed general interpretation and idealistic job performance, involving five items. *Activism* dealt with reformism and concern about newsroom space/time constraints, gauged by four items. While some factor loadings were rather low[80] reliability proved adequate. Alpha coefficients were .66 for idealistic interpretation, .70 for traditionality and a marginal .51 for activism.[81] Furthermore, the three belief clusters appeared to be quite distinct. The zero-order correlation between traditionality and activism was negative ($r = -.30$, p less than .01), paralleling the relationship of $-.19$ between neutral and participant stances reported by Johnstone, et al.[82] Also, neither traditionality nor activism correlated significantly with idealistic interpretation.

Location and story-type measures. Respondents were asked here to imagine the total news hole of their paper and to allocate it from three different perspectives. In dealing with the story location or dateline, instructions were as follows:

> Editors must often decide on a mix of local, state, national and international news. Of course, the mix may vary with events from day to day. However, in the long haul, journalists probably develop some rough guidelines.
>
> Obviously size of news hole is not a perfect measure of news play. Ten column-inches on page one may be equivalent to 20 or 30 inches inside. Headline size makes a difference, too. In answering here, weigh front and inside pages as you think appropriate to indicate *overall news play*.
>
> In answering the next several questions, consider the total news hole over a long period – perhaps a year or so.
>
> Now, what percentage of total play devoted to each type of news – local, state, national and international – would bring the *greatest overall readership and circulation in your area*? Would it be 25% in each of the four types? Would it be 50% vs. 40% vs. 8% vs. 2%? Or what? Provide four percentages, summing to 100. You may not be sure, but give your best estimate.

The respondent wrote a number before each of four location labels –

international, national, state and local – to provide a profile of EA (editor's perception of what would have greatest audience appeal). Similar ratings were then given for editor's own or EO preference (what would make the paper most interesting and worthy of reading to you personally?) and NJ or projected news play (Please imagine you are editor-in-chief of your paper and can set policy. How much play would you devote, in the long run, to the four types of stories?).

Next, similar ratings were given on *spot* news which reports factually on recent events, *interpretative* or investigative reporting to clarify causes and implications, and *human interest* or *soft* news which titillates, amuses, startles and brings enjoyment. The questionnaire noted that journalists seem to see these as three distinct types of stories – even though a given article may fall in more than one category. The NJ or projected use ratings came last for both story location and type. Having just defined own and perceived-audience preferences, respondents were in a position to weigh the importance of each in projecting news play. In that way, some thought about autonomy and followership should have occurred. Most journalists could distinguish among the three judgment perspectives. Also, very few had trouble producing percentages which summed to 100.

News-orientation measures. Each of the three variables here – congruency, autonomy and followership – was measured in three different ways. First, simple subtraction, ignoring signs, yielded a measure of difference between two location profiles as needed. For example, one respondent allocated news emphasis as shown in Table 2 for the perceived-audience and own personal ratings. This person's score on congruency as to location was 80, the sum of numbers in the right-hand column. In like manner, comparison of own personal stance with projected news judgment yielded a measure of autonomy, while perceived audience views and projected news judgment determined followership. In the same way, subtraction generated congruency, autonomy and follower-

TABLE 2

Illustrative Computation of Congruency as to Location For One Respondent

	Perceived audience (EA)	Own personal (EO)	Difference
International	10	50	40
National	40	40	0
State	40	5	35
Local	10	5	5

Congruency = 80, the sum of values in the difference column.

ship scores on story type. In both the location and type procedures, a high score indicated low similarity between two profiles (i.e., low congruency, followership or autonomy).

The third set of news-orientation measures stemmed from three 11-point rating scales reflecting one's own overall news judgment. Instructions were as follows:

> Now we'd like you to stand back and look at news judgment in even more general terms than you have just been doing . . . . A reminder, once again, that you are answering as a journalist in the area where you work, taking into account your newspaper's audience. You are to assume you control editorial policy.
>
> First, assume you are judging news as to what should get high, medium or low play in your paper — or no play at all. How much would that judgment depend on what seems interesting and/or important to you personally? If your own preferences make no difference at all in news judgment, check 0. If your own preferences are so important that they serve as the sole criterion, check 10. Or give an appropriate number between 0 and 10.

After checking an 11-point scale from 0 through 10, indicating autonomy, the respondent estimated on a similar continuum the weight attached to what would interest or seem important to members of the reading audience. The latter rating looked at followership. Finally, congruency was gauged by assessing how close the respondent felt he or she and a "typical or average reader of the paper" really were as to news interests and tastes. A zero rating denoted no similarity at all, a 10 identical tastes.

The mean product-moment correlations among the three measures (type, location and own overall news judgment) was .28 (p less than .01) for congruency, .21 (p less than .01) for followership, and only .09 (p greater than .05) for autonomy. These data suggest some convergent validity for congruency and followership but enough divergence to warrant treating the three measures of each variable separately in analysis. In a pilot study with 100 advanced Ohio University journalism students, the projected-judgment and location measures correlated significantly though mildly with a set of indices based on actual ratings of 18 varied news leads. These data provided some further evidence of validity. Of course, the news-orientation measures are subject to measurement artifacts of the type noted by Wackman in coorientation research.[83] For example, high congruency and high followership could automatically lead to high autonomy with the location and type measures. Such artifacts were controlled by partialling out the other two news-orientation variables of a given type (for example, congruency and followership as to story location while studying a given attribute (i.e., autonomy of location) as it related to predictor variables.[84]

The mean bivariate correlation among autonomy, followership and congruency measures was .41 (p less than .01) for location data, .38 (p less than .01) with type, and only .14 (p less than .05) with own news judg-

ment. In analysis, the own-judgment ratings received strongest emphasis for two reasons. First, apparent contamination of any one index by the other two was quite small in view of low inter-index correlations. Second, the projected ratings dealt with overall news-judgment behavior rather than narrow assessment of specific criteria.

An additional set of measures were computed by subtracting followership from autonomy for each of the three measurement procedures (location, type, and projected news play). This reflected the notion that journalists may experience a tug of war between own and perceived audience perspectives, as did Norman Cousins in the latter days of the original *Saturday Review of Literature.*[85] Also, an overall autonomy/followership index was constructed to reflect more fully the notion of news judgment as a tug of war between self and audience. For each of the three measurement procedures, a respondent was given a score of 0 if followership exceeded autonomy, 1 if the two scores were equal, and 2 if autonomy exceeded followership. Adding these figures yielded scores from 0 through 6.

To provide additional background and control, respondents indicated how many years they had worked in writing and editing jobs both overall and at their current papers. Finally, they estimated how much emphasis their papers placed on interpretative reporting (as opposed to spot news), using the average American newspaper as a standard of comparison. Responses here were on a five-point scale from much more emphasis than average to much less.

Findings

Hypothesis 1 was supported. As shown in Table 1, belief in news-element utility loaded at .51 on the traditionality factor. Furthermore, both belief in the utility and widespread use of formal layout and belief in newswriting conventions (the latter tapped by a single item) correlated with traditionality ($r = .33$, p less than .001, in each case).

Hypothesis 2 also gained support. Problem recognition correlated positively with belief in the need for idealistic interpretation ($r = .28$, p less than .001). Apparently, then, support for interpretative reporting did entail a belief that news people, even when handling spot news, deal with a rather complex and uncertain world.

Hypothesis 3 was supported. Concern with space/time constraints correlated substantially with acceptance of activist beliefs. (In Table 1, concern with constraints loaded at .50 on the activism factor.) Also, the view that top executives influence news judgment a great deal correlated with belief in activism ($r = .17$, p less than .01). While activists worried somewhat more than non-activists about front-office pressures, as expected, high traditionalists and those stressing interpretation showed no such inclination.

Correlations between the three belief clusters and assessments of story type (spot, human interest and interpretation) appear in Table 3. Second-order partial correlations were computed, controlling for media experience and circulation, to insure that job status and setting did not account for variation in news assessments attributed to beliefs. As predicted in Hypothesis 4, traditionalists tended to emphasize spot news at the expense of interpretation. This held with all three rating perspectives (journalist's own, audience's and projected news judgment). Furthermore, relationships changed little when paper circulation and years spent working in the media were partialled out.

Hypothesis 5 gained partial support, as shown in Table 3. Believers in interpretation tended more than non-believers to emphasize investigative reporting and downgrade human interest in their own preferences and in overall news judgment. However, the news-judgment relationships narrowly missed significance when experience and circula-

TABLE 3

Product Moment Correlations between Journalism-Belief Factors and Emphasis on Three Types of News

	Idealistic Interpretation	Traditionality	Activism
Investigative reporting – audience preferences	−.06(−.06)	−.18**(−.18**)	.14*(.14**)
Investigative reporting – own preferences	.14*(.14*)	−.28**(−.25**)	.25**(.23**)
Investigative reporting – own projected news judgment	.11*(.10)	−.18**(−.17**)	.24**(.22**)
Human interest – audience preferences	.02(.01)	−.02(−.02)	.04(.03)
Human interest – own preferences	−.10*(−.10*)	.14*(.14*)	−.05(−.04)
Human interest – own news judgment	−.14*(−.09)	−.04(−.02)	−.04(−.03)
Spot news – audience preferences	.05(.07)	.16**(.16**)	−.15**(−.14*)
Spot news – own preferences	−.06(−.05)	.16**(.15**)	−.21**(−.21**)
Spot news – own news judgment	.04(−.02)	.23**(.17**)	−.19**(−.18**)

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

In each cell, the first figure given is the zero-order correlation between the row and column variables. The figure in parentheses is a second-order partial correlation with circulation of one's own newspaper and years spent working in the media controlled.

tion were controlled. As expected, high and low believers did not differ as to emphasis on spot news.

Hypothesis 6 received clear support. High activists tended to stress investigation and downgrade spot news more than did lows. Furthermore, these relationships remained significant with job-related controls. As anticipated, activists did not downgrade human interest news, perhaps because they saw it as pertinent to the dramatic and conflict-laden interpretation they would stress.

Table 4 reports on weight accorded stories of different locations. Once again, paper size and media experience were partialled. Correlations related to state news were not significant and are deleted. As predicted in Hypothesis 7, traditionalists tended to emphasize local news at the expense of both national and international, even with controls. Apparently localism squared with the traditional viewpoint.

TABLE 4

Product Moment Correlations between Journalism-Belief Factors and Emphasis on News with Three Levels of Proximity

	Idealistic Interpretation	Traditionality	Activism
International news – audience preferences	.03(.04)	−.09(−.14*)	.19**(.18**)
International news – own preferences	.01(−.05)	−.21**(−.24**)	.14*(.12*)
International news – own projected judgment	.06(.04)	−.22**(−.21**)	.15**(.15**)
National news – audience preferences	.11*(.12*)	−.15**(−.13*)	.10*(.06)
National news – own preferences	.09(.08)	−.23**(−.21**)	.10*(.06)
National news – own news judgment	.21**(.17**)	−.22**(−.22**)	.12*(.09)
Local news – audience preferences	−.03(−.03)	.15**(.14*)	−.13**(−.10)
Local news – own preferences	−.03(−.01)	.33**(.30**)	−.16**(−.14*)
Local news – own news judgment	−.12*(−.10)	.23**(.23**)	−.14*(−.13*)

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

In each cell, the first figure given is the zero-order correlation between the row and column variables. The figure in parentheses is a second-order partial correlation with circulation of one's own paper and years spent working in the media controlled. Correlations involving emphasis on state news did not reach statistical significance and are not reported.

Hypothesis 8 was supported partially and tentatively. Belief in interpretation correlated positively with national-news emphasis in presumed audience interest and own overall news judgment. However, while high interpreters downgraded local news more than did lows in news judgment, this association barely missed significance with media experience and circulation controlled.

As expected from Hypothesis 9, high activists upgraded international and de-emphasized local news more than did lows. This held from all three judgment perspectives and with or without controls.

TABLE 5

Product Moment Correlations between Journalism-Belief Factors and Measures of Congruency, Followership, and Autonomy/Followership

	Idealistic Interpretation	Traditionality	Activism
Congruency as to location	−.01(−.07)	.11*(.10*)	−.08(−.01)
Congruency as to story type	−.05(−.06)	.18**(.16**)	−.20**(−.09)
Congruency in one's own news-judgment behavior	−.16**(−.18**)	.24**(.26**)	−.12*(−.13*)
Followership as to location	−.04(−.01)	.10(.05)	−.20**(−.18**)
Followership as to story type	−.08(−.06)	.09(.01)	−.17**(−.09)
Followership in one's own news-judgment behavior	−.10*(−.05)	.24**(.18**)	−.12*(−.09)
Autonomy/followership as to location	.04	.01	.09
Autonomy/followership as to story type	.12*	.03	.05
Autonomy/followership in one's own news-judgment behavior	.08	−.23**	.13*
Autonomy/followership (summed index)	.11*	−.09	.13*

*p < .05
**p < .01

In each cell, the first figure given is the zero-order correlation between the row and column variables. The figure in parentheses is the second-order partial correlation with the two other news-orientation variables controlled (for example, autonomy and congruency with respect to location, where the criterion measure is followership as to location). Such controls were not feasible with the autonomy/followership data. All correlations were based on an n of between 253 and 258. Correlations involving location and story-type data were reversed in sign because, with these measuring techniques, a high score represented low congruency, followership or autonomy.

Table 5 presents data on news-orientation. The three autonomy measures did not correlate with any of the belief measures, so related correlations aren't shown. Apart from this, Hypothesis 10 was supported in general. High traditionalists scored high on all three measures of congruency and high on followership in overall news judgment. These relationships held up when measurement artifacts were partialled out.

Hypotheses 11 and 12 received only tentative support. High believers in activism and interpretation scored lower on congruency of overall news judgment than did lows. Also, activism correlated negatively with followership as to location, even with controls. While both belief clusters correlated negatively (as predicted) with followership scores on own news judgment, controls wiped out these tendencies.

In addition to the findings directly related to Hypotheses 10, 11 and 12, additional points of interest can be noted in Table 5. The data on autonomy/followership suggest the belief clusters bear on the tug of war between self and audience. High traditionalists tended to score low on autonomy/followership of overall news judgment, suggesting their own views lost the tug quite often. However, traditionalism and autonomy/followership did not correlate significantly ($r = -.09$, p greater than .05) with the index summed across all three measurement procedures. Also, activists showed a mild tendency to stress autonomy with both overall news judgment and the summed index ($r = .13$, p less than .05, in each case). Furthermore, high believers in interpretation scored slightly higher than lows on autonomy/followership of story type ($r = .12$, p less than .05) and with the summed index ($r = .11$, p less than .05).

Conclusions about news-orientation are tentative. The data suggest, however, that the hypothesized tug of war between self and audience is meaningful to journalists. That is to say, autonomy, congruency and followership do relate to widely discussed ideas about newsroom constraints, decision rules, an active or inactive role in defining news, story location and story type.

Analyses thus far have not controlled for job-related variables and other belief clusters while analyzing possible impact of a given predictor. To provide such controls, stepwise multiple regressions were performed with 11 predictor variables. In each cell of Tables 6 and 7, a standardized beta coefficient indicates the apparent impact of a given predictor with all others controlled. Overall, belief in traditionality proved to be the strongest predictor of news-orientation variables and of emphasis on different locations and story types. It correlated positively with congruency and followership, negatively with autonomy/followership, postively with spot-news emphasis but negatively with investigative, and positively with local-news play but negatively with national and international

TABLE 6

Standardized Regression Coefficients in Four Multiple Regression Analyses On Journalists' Estimated News-Orientation Ratings Involving Overall News Judgment

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Congruency	Followership	Autonomy	Autonomy/ Followership
Traditionality	.27**	.28**	−.04	−.20**
Own paper's perceived interpretative emphasis	−.15*	.05	.11***	.08
Idealistic interpretation	−.11***	−.07	.05	.09
Years of media experience	.11***	−.16*	.04	.13*
Perceived emphasis needed on conflict and bad news	.07	−.16**	−.08	.01
Circulation of respondent's paper	.01	−.03	.18**	.16*
F-ratio*	F = 4.45	F = 3.50	F = 1.54	F = 3.22
	p < .01	p < .01	p < .05	p < .01
	df = 11,238	df = 11,238	df = 11,238	df = 9,240
Multiple r^2 (percentage of variance accounted for by 11 predictors combined)	.16	.14	.07	.11

Predictor variables included in analyses but deleted from table because they yielded no significant regression coefficients included activism, problem recognition, concern about front-office dominance of news-judgment processes, perceived current adherence to traditional newswriting practice and belief in the prevalence and desirability of formal newspaper makeup.

*p < .05

**p < .01, based on F-ratio used to test significance of variance contributed by a given predictor.

***p = .08

TABLE 7

Standardized Regression Coefficients in Five Multiple Regression Analyses On Journalists' Overall News-Judgment Ratings

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Investigative Emphasis	Spot-news Emphasis	International Emphasis	National Emphasis	Local Emphasis
Activism	.16*	−.16*	.08	.03	−.08
Years of media experience	−.14*	.09	.12***	.07	−.06
Traditionality	−.12**	.14*	−.19**	−.19**	.19**
Own paper's perceived interpretative emphasis	.12***	−.04	−.05	−.15*	.15*
Idealistic interpretation	.07	.02	−.01	.16*	−.08
Circulation of respondent's paper	.04	.04	.18**	.22**	−.08
F-ratio	F = 3.29	F = 2.08	F = 3.05	F = 6.12	F = 3.59
	p < .01	p < .05	p < .01	p < .01	p < .01
	df = 11,238	df = 11,238	df = 11,238	df = 10,239	df = 10,239
Multiple r^2 (proportion of variance accounted for by 11 predictors)	.13	.09	.12	.20	.13

Predictor variables included in analyses but deleted from table because they yielded no significant regression coefficients included problem recognition, perceived current adherence to traditional newswriting practice, perceived emphasis needed on conflict and bad news, belief in the prevalence and desirability of formal makeup and concern about front-office dominance of news-judgment processes.

*p < .05

**p < .01, based on F-ratio used to test significance of variance contributed by a given predictor.

***p = .08

priorities. The activist's tendency to upgrade investigative material at the expense of spot news held up with controls. Otherwise, activist beliefs were not a useful predictor. Belief in interpretation correlated positively with national emphasis, negatively with congruency. The latter association did not quite reach conventional significance levels, however ($b = -.11$, p equals .08).

Job-history and newspaper attributes provided some clues as to factors affecting beliefs about news. First, people with many years of media experience tended to downgrade investigative material slightly while showing low followership and high autonomy/followership. The first of these relationships suggests "veterans" have traditional views. The second does not. Second, where a journalist's own paper emphasized interpretation, he or she tended to have low congruency and high autonomy while emphasizing local but de-emphasizing national news. It appears that actually doing interpretation requires emphasis on local staffing as well as some inclination to give readers needed background which many may not want (reflected in a slight tendency toward autonomy but not followership). Third, large-paper employees tended to emphasize international and national news — but not to deemphasize local material significantly. Furthermore, paper size correlated positively with autonomy and autonomy/followership. Predictably, large-paper staffers viewed their publications as cosmopolitan in function and themselves as somewhat removed from their audiences. These data square with the findings of Johnstone, et al., that non-traditional participant values are most prevalent in large cities.[86]

TABLE 8

Mean Congruency, Followership and Autonomy Scores
In Judging Ideal Locus and Type and In Own News Judgment

	Ideal Story Locus (emphasis on international, national, state and local news)	Ideal Story Type (emphasis on investigative, spot and human interest news)	One's Actual News-Judgment Behavior
Congruency	30.83	23.73	5.26
Followership	15.32*	15.35	7.21**
Autonomy	25.57*	16.72	4.85**

All means are computed for the entire sample, $n = 258$. For the locus and type measures, a low score indicates a high level of congruency, followership or autonomy.

* These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 4.76$, $p < .001$.

** These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 12.29$, $p < .001$.

Tables 8, 9 and 10 shed some further light on overall news-judgment beliefs. Table 8 shows that, overall, followership exceeded autonomy. (Note that, for location and story type, difference scores are reported. A high score means low similarity, hence low congruency, followership or autonomy.) This difference was marked for story-location and overall-judgment measures, but it was non-significant with story type. Apparently journalists had bought the view, taught early in journalism classes, that they must write and edit for the audience and not for themselves.

Table 9 indicates that, from all perspectives, news personnel allocated about 40 to 45% of total news emphasis to spot news and 25 to 35% each to investigation and human interest. Journalists saw themselves as more strongly oriented toward interpretation, less toward human interest, than their readers. This suggests some doubt that interpretative materials will sell in the marketplace. The right-hand column of Table 9 indicates a tendency to follow audience rather than self in emphasizing spot news. Interestingly, people appeared to strike a reasonably even balance between self and audience in projecting play of investigative and human-interest material. In the latter two areas, mean projected play fell about half-way between own and perceived-audience ratings.

Table 10 shows that sample members saw themselves as slightly more cosmopolitan (inclined toward national and international news) than their readers, but slightly less interested in local coverage. Furthermore, the right-hand column suggests high followership in dealing with local and national news but a tendency to give readers somewhat more interna-

TABLE 9

Mean Percentage of News Emphasis Allocated to Investigative Spot and Soft News from Three Perspectives

	Ideal For Appeal to Own Paper's Readers	Ideal For Appeal to Respondent	Mix Respondent Would Strive For If In Charge of Paper
Investigative reporting	25.48%*	33.35%*	28.32%
Spot news	43.74%	40.87%	43.74%
Soft or human interest news	30.95%**	25.74%**	27.88%
Total	100.17%	99.96%	99.94%

Means computed for entire sample, n = 258. Column totals differ slightly from 100% because of rounding error and a small number of respondent errors.

* These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 7.88$, $p < .001$.

** These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 5.24$, $p < .001$.

tional content than they were believed to want. Interestingly, state news appeared to puzzle many journalists. Several commented that state government is important but hard to cover and not of much interest to readers. Quite a few said state copy has potential importance but cannot be handled well given current resources. Perhaps partly because of such doubts and uncertainties, views on state news correlated with almost no variables used in the study.

Somewhat surprisingly, the overall patterns in Tables 9 and 10 showed up when these tables were developed separately for 122 journalists on papers with at least 100,000 circulation and the 136 on smaller publications. Large-paper employees thought in more cosmopolitan, autonomous terms as noted earlier. However, the inclinations to follow audience preferences primarily with regard to spot, local and national news was apparent in each group.

Comparison of levels of belief in the three clusters proved intriguing. Possible values ranged from 10 to 50 on the 10-item traditionalism scale, 5 to 25 on the five interpretation items, and 4 to 20 on the four statements relating to activism. To make all ranges comparable (5 to 25), each traditionalism score was multiplied by 0.5 and each activism value by 1.25. Mean scores adjusted in this way were 21.60 for interpretation, 19.41 for traditionality and only 11.27 for activism. A good deal of recent literature suggests that neutral, traditional, objective journalism is on the

TABLE 10

Mean Percentage of News Emphasis Allocated to International, National, State and Local News from Three Perspectives

	Ideal For Appeal to Own Paper's Readers	Ideal For Appeal to Respondent	Mix Respondent Would Strive For If In Charge of Paper
International	14.88%*	19.76%*	16.33%
National	22.26%**	26.52%**	22.66%
State	20.03%	18.97%	19.88%
Local	42.89%***	34.71%***	41.22%
Total	100.06%	99.96%	100.09%

Means computed for entire sample, n = 258. Column totals differ slightly from 100% because of rounding error and a small number of respondent errors.

* These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 6.25$, $p < .001$.

** These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 5.91$, $p < .001$.

*** These means differ significantly, based on a matched-sample t-test. $t = 6.41$, $p < .001$.

decline — at least, among younger, better educated journalists and more successful reporters. Data from this study reported elsewhere give limited support to this. Senior, copy and wire editors did score higher on traditionalism, lower on activism, than reporters.[87] However, while interpretation has caught on strongly as an ideal within the sample, activist reporting has not. Apparently talk about advocacy journalism has seldom affected basic thinking about standards and ideals.

The believer in interpretation here, like the participant journalist in Johnstone, et al.,[88] tended to be less experienced (r between experience and belief in interpretation in the present study = −.13, p less than .05) than the non-believer. Further, staff size correlated positively with interpretative leaning here (r = .10, p less than .05), while organization size correlated positively with participant orientation for Johnstone, et al.[89] Thus the two studies parallel each other.

Interestingly, belief in formal makeup seemed to carry with it a tendency to embrace new interpretative techniques while accepting tradition and rejecting activism. The layout-style index correlated positively with belief in interpretation (r = .17, p less than .01), and traditionality (r = .33, p less than .001), but negatively with activism (r = −.18, p less than .01).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study of 258 varied news personnel from 17 varied papers supported the view of Argyris[90] and others that beliefs about contemporary newspaper journalism fall in three distinct clusters — traditional, interpretative and activist. Data paint a picture of each type of journalistic thought as summarized in Table 11. Specifically, the *traditionalist* emphasizes local and spot news, downgrades interpretative and national-international material, and tends to score high on congruency (assumed similarity between self and audience as to news preference) and followership (weight given to perceived audience interest when judging news). *Activists* and, somewhat tentatively, *interpreters* seem inclined to downgrade local news. Also, interpreters tend to upgrade national material, perhaps because this category accounts for much of the best known interpretative material. By contrast, activists stress international copy, perhaps in line with an oft-noted tendency for cause-oriented persons to assume their causes have cosmic importance. Both interpreters and activists tend to stress investigative reporting. Activists do so at the expense of spot news, perhaps partly because human interest, conflict and drama relate to their preferred brand of coverage. Interpreters, on the other hand, downgrade human interest rather than spot news, apparently showing a fairly high regard for the latter in light of a feeling that interpretation should build thorough coverage of events. In a 1981

study of journalists at eight varied newspapers, Burgoon, Burgoon and Atkin confirmed findings reported here that journalists respect tradition more than avant-garde "new journalism," that they accord fairly high weight to perceived audience interests when thinking about news judgment and that they feel readers have relatively little interest in international-national news or interpretation.[91]

It was expected, on the basis of an earlier unpublished study of students, that variables from Grunig's information-systems theory would influence congruency. Specifically, it was theorized that low problem

TABLE 11

Expected Tendencies with Each of Three Perspectives

Distinguishing Characteristics	Traditional	Interpretative	Activism
Focus in beliefs about newspapers	Strong Belief in decision rules (news elements, inverted pyramid, summary lead, formal layout) (1)[a]	Problem recognition high (2)[a]	Concern for time-space, executive constraints high (3)[a]
Emphasis on story types[e]	High on spot [a] Low on interpretation [a] (4)	High on interpretation [a] Low on human interest [b] (5)	High on interpretation [a] Low on spot [a] (6)
Emphasis on story locations [e]	High on local [a] Low on national-international [a] (7)	High on national [a] Low on local [b] (8)	High on international [a] Low on local [a] (9)
News-orientation [e]	High congruency [a] High followership [a] Low autonomy [d] (10)	Low congruency [a] Low followership [c] High autonomy [d] (11)	Low congruency [a] Low followerships [c] High autonomy [d] (12)

The number in parentheses indicates the hypothesis summarized within a given cell of the table.

[a] Relationship denoted was significant at .05 level and held up with controls introduced through partial correlation. (See tables 3,4 and 5.)

[b] Relationship denoted was significant at .05 level in zero-order analysis, but controls for circulation of one's own paper and years spent working in the media eliminated significance. (See tables 3 and 4.)

[c] Relationship denoted was significant at .05 level in zero-order analysis, but controls for measurement artifacts in news-orientation eliminated significance. (See table 5.)

[d] No significant relationship observed. (See table 5.)

[e] Data summarized in this row focuses on data about projected news judgment rather than editor's own or perceived-audience interest.

recognition (belief that news assessment is complex and requires lots of information) but high acceptance of newsroom decision rules (news elements such as human interest and consequence, the inverted pyramid, the summary lead, etc.) would increase congruency by inhibiting careful analysis needed to sense differences between self and audience. These predictions were not borne out. Information-systems variables, however, did play an important role in spelling out apparent meanings of belief clusters. Problem recognition correlated positively with interpretative orientation as predicted. Also, belief in the usefulness of news elements helped define the traditionality index, concern with space-time constraints the activism index. Furthermore, overall belief clusters correlated with congruency as the theory suggests. Belief in interpretation (a positive correlate of problem recognition) correlated negatively with congruency; while traditionality (of which belief in decision rules was an aspect) correlated positively with it.[92] These concepts show promise as predictors of editor and reporter behavior.

Data not reported here suggested that editors do differ somewhat from reporters and senior editors from younger journalists in beliefs about the news business.[93] In the present analyses, however, media experience proved to be an adequate substitute for job title in achieving control.

The three belief clusters warrant attention from journalism educators and critics. Most teachers in media-and-society, communication theory and law, press history and ethics probably seek to emphasize careful, thoughtful interpretation. Instructors may differ markedly, however, in dealing with ideas related to activism and traditionality. In any event, educational goals and evaluation might very well take these notions into account.

Multiple-regression analyses suggest that acceptance or rejection of traditional beliefs about journalism has more to do with thinking about journalistic practice than do beliefs about activism or the need for interpretation. Tradition dies hard, and the most important debates may center on it rather than on alternatives. The data indicate that traditionalism in the newspaper business may involve two underlying notions. The first is local orientation — becoming deeply involved in a local community so as to emphasize local news and following audience interests in news judgment. The second is concern with pragmatic efficiency — apparently at the root of the traditionalist emphasis on spot news which can be processed quickly and on decision rules such as news elements and newswriting conventions.

Results here also make sense in light of the six-stage model of moral/ethical development suggested by Kohlberg[94] and applied recently to news personnel by Black, Barney and Van Tubergen.[95] Three of their six stages seem related to the three belief clusters noted here. Specifical-

ly, Stage 1, emphasizing arbitrary fixed rules, squares with the notion that *traditionalists* tend more than others to believe in widely accepted decision rules in writing, layout and news judgment. Stage 4, as described by Black, et al., has an interpretative ring. They believe a person at this stage of moral development may be carrying on "a search for agreement, not based on majority opinion, but upon lines of reasoning that any logical social being could adhere to. At this stage, social institutions represent the kind of contract rational people have with each other." Stage 6 posits a concern for universal ethical principles not specific to a given group, society or culture. Some activists may border on this state in light of their modest tendencies to emphasize international news, question normative conventions, and express concern about front-office pressure. These parallels are rough and speculative but merit further study. Certainly they might provide useful grist for discussion in certain classes. It's interesting but no doubt controversial to suggest that movement from traditionality to interpretation to activism represents progress or increased complexity of approach.

In another area, the possible association between belief clusters and professionalism in journalism needs attention. The present research deals with professional concepts[96] only in passing. However, emphasis on autonomy in work as part of "professionalization" could give support to interpretative and activist rather than traditional thought.

The present research supported in many ways the neutral-participant distinction proposed by Johnstone, et al.[97] The data here, however, suggest that non-traditionalists fall into two rather distinct categories — interpretative and activist — rather than one.

The news-orientation model should prove helpful in defining approaches to editorial work. Future research might explore further the finding here that community size and probably diversity[98] correlate positively with autonomy. Also, increased knowledge of and specialization in the topics which journalists cover might have a similar effect.[99] One might expect small-town editors who have grown up in areas where they work to have high congruency with their audiences — and to practice high followership without a feeling that they are ignoring personal viewpoints. However, opinion-magazine editors promoting a cause or viewpoint might show great autonomy. (William Buckley's editorial decisions, for example, probably hinge more on his own beliefs than on what he thinks will play with his audience.) And media gatekeepers drawing on audience research in creating articles or programs, as recommended by Mendelsohn,[100] might be high followers. Building on such cases, the model might help define editing styles so as to aid in job selection. The author has already found news-orientation exercises or games useful in teaching editing.[101]

Obviously, further study is needed on a truly national sample. Also, longitudinal research might shed light on causal direction — on whether a job, with its contacts and demands, determines beliefs or beliefs influence job selection.

NOTES

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80. A subscale was used to define a given factor if the subscale's highest loading fell on that factor in three- and four-factor solutions and if, in each case, this loading exceeded the subscale's second highest by about .20 or more. Fairly low primary loadings were accepted partly to achieve comparability with the Johnstone, et al., data. (Their brief discussion indicates that, in their factor analysis of general-belief items, no factor loadings exceeded .375.) Also, acceptance seemed justified in light of the fact that each subscale within a given scale correlated in the same way with almost all criterion measures. Wendt argues that this is an important consideration in inferring unidimensionality. See J.C. Wendt, "Canonical Correlation as an Exploratory Technique of Attitude Scale Construction," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 43:518-31 (1979).

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